COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION
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ARISTOCRATIC
XTRATERRESTRIAL
TIME-TRAVELING
THIEVES
TM

Cover colors by Brian Talley

"X-THIEVES" X-TRA!

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

Dear people,

Well, I guess you're entitled. Though X-THIEVES is a relatively new publication, through **SOUTHERN KNIGHTS** you can legitimately claim to be a long-standing participant in the independent comics scene. Thus, I'm sure that the current "glut" must be very frustrating to you, when everything seems to have gone haywire!

Now, I'm not one of those people who say that there are "too many" comics on the market today, or complain that there are so many comics being published that I can't possibly read them *all*. When you walk into a bookstore, do you say that there are too many books? Are you unhappy that there are so many books being published that you can't read them all? No, of course not! You are pleased that you have the selection! You might even wish for *more* different books! So the problem does not lie in the *number* of comics being published today — at least, that isn't the basic problem, in my view.

I see essentially two main problems. First, the above-mentioned diversity is not strongly present. While there are more different types of comics being published today than was true only a few years ago, it is sadly also true that a large number of the new publications are depressingly similar to existing material.

The second major problem has to do with quality. It is *not* that many of the new comics are rather poor in quality. There have always been poor comics and there always will be. (This is true in virtually *any* field, of course!) What the real problem is, is that the number of comics — the "glut" — seems to be adversely affecting *good* comics as well as the poorer ones! And it isn't a case of different people having different views of which comics are "good" — at least, not entirely.

Maybe the real problem is that the marketplace didn't know who to *handle* the increase in the number of comics being published. Through lack of knowledge or misunderstanding or carelessness or greed or whatever, the wrong moves were made in many instances and everyone suffered. Hopefully, we will have learned from the experience.

Generally, I found your story, "Glut" to be an asture and humourous parable of the whole situation. You exaggerated several aspects, but that is certainly permissable in this type of story. For instance, you showed *all* fences (dealers) to be greedy and unfair, while, of course, there are many comic book dealers who continued to be fair and reasonable through the comics glut and did not contribute to the market destabilization.

And say, that Fredmobile really *is* amazing — being able to shrink *people*! If Bianca had gotten out of the Fredmobile when she was still small would she have remained that size when the Fredmobile enlarged itself?

Just one comment I'd like to make in connection with your remarks on my letter in #4's lettercol, Henry. Though I said that we have a *good* situation and should be *thankful* for it, I *didn't* say that it couldn't be *better* or that we shouldn't *do* something to try to *make* it better! One thing that bothers *me* is that on a given topic, many people seem to feel we must be *either* pleased or critical. I feel we should be *both* pleased and critical — pleased with what is good, critical of what could be better. Both are necessary. Without acknowledging the good we may become discouraged, but without acknowledging the bad we may lose our determination.

"T.M. Maple"
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*Excellent points, **TM**! As with you, I am not bothered by the* number *of new comics. No, what bothers me are the people who have begun to equate black and white books, no matter what the level of workmanship, with those poor books.*

*As a side note, the Fredmobile doesn't shrink people — the insides of the car are actually bigger than the outside! Anyone familiar with **DOCTOR WHO** should be familiar with the basic principles used in the Fredmobile (relative dimensions, for those of you unlucky enough not to have been exposed to the good Doctor).*

Dear Henry,

God, this is one of the funniest comics around! Make a nice counterpoint after reading **GRENDEL**, y'know?

Love the in-jokes, both within comics and the loony-tunes SF worlds as well.

GLUT was priceless. You did a magnificent job lampooning the black-and-white industry, which needed a long-overdue skewering. I am just glad that your comics have not suffered over much from the glut. Quality does tend to rise to the top, I guess — especially since the Morris Comics Library passes X-THIEVES around to anyone who shows the remotest interest in it! So far, no one's complained!

Jeff Morris
1614 Grant Road
Webster Groves, MO 63119

Hi:

Finally found a #4 and #5. Now if only 3 . . .

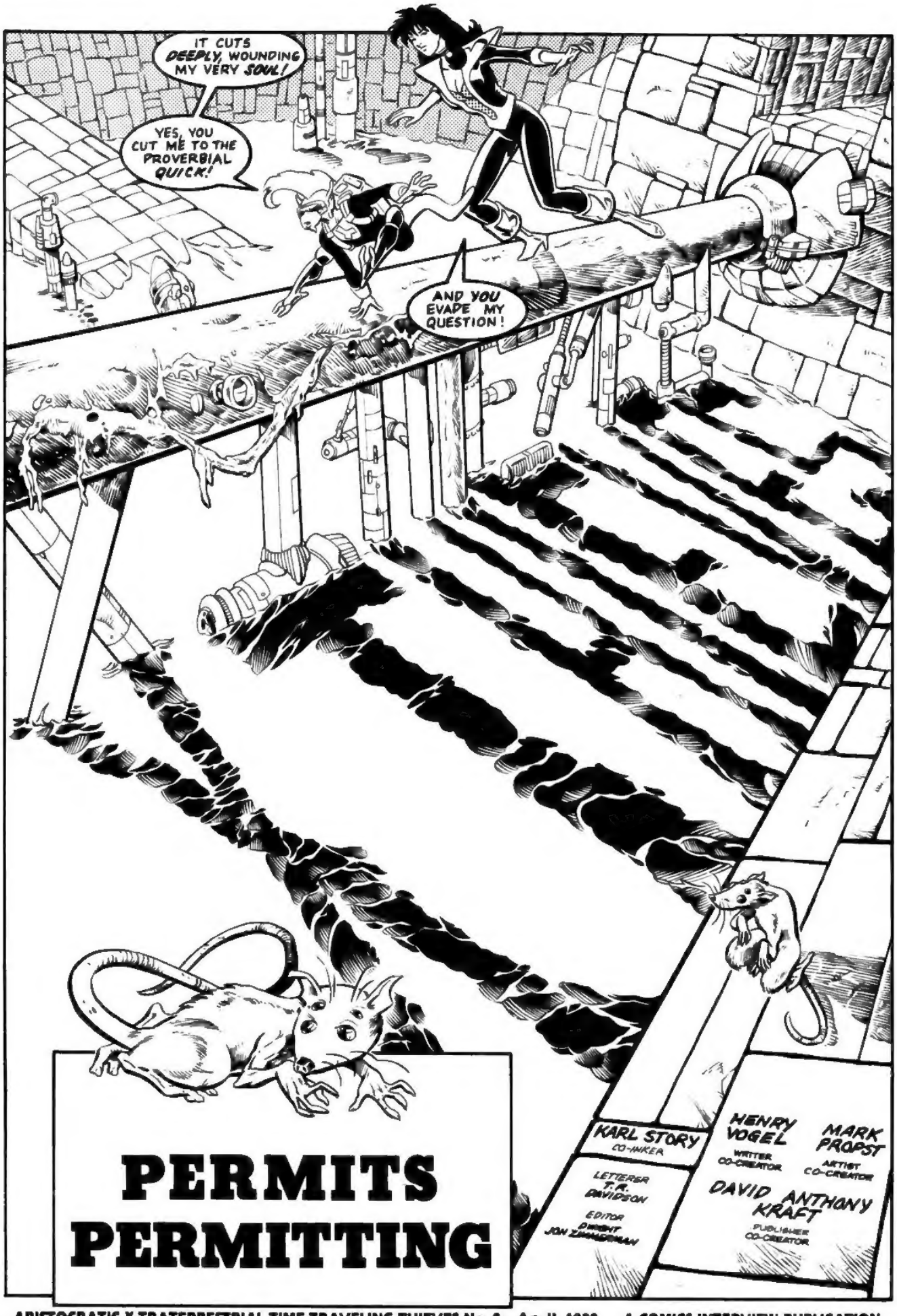
First the praise: I enjoy your efforts in the comic book satire arena . . . But (now the gripe) . . .

I do take exception to the suggestion on page 24 that Fred and Bianca are the only "professionals" in the storyline. When this statement is projected back to your front inside cover remarks of the B&W comic "glut," it seems to imply that **X-THIEVES** is the only "professionally" done book (read the last 4 panels of page 24 again). This isn't fair to the number of other quality B&W books out there — a number of whose characters seem to make cameo appearances in this story hustling their wares. Be fair — there's a lot of *bad* B&Ws, agreed — but there's a lot of *good* B&Ws too. (Oh, yes — **X-THIEVES** rates, in my opinion, as a *good* book; I'll be buying regularly or whenever I can find it).

Mike Dempsey
Norwich, CT 06360

I think you're reading too much into the scene at the end of the book. Buzz, the fence, had spent the entire day dealing with thieves of the calibre of the ones he was speaking to in the first panel of page 24. He was simply fed up with them and their ilk and pleased to deal with a professional.

NIGHT -- IT IS A TIME WITHOUT COLORS...
NO ADMITTANCE
GAK! FRED -- THIS IS A SEWER, NOT AN ENTRANCE TUNNEL!
IT STINKS! AND -- OH GROSS -- I JUST STEPPED ON SOMETHING THAT SQUISHED!
IT IS A TIME WHEN THE MOON'S HARSH LIGHT CASTS EVERYTHING INTO A SHARP RELIEF OF BLACK AND WHITE.
IT IS A TIME WITH WHICH FEW PEOPLE ARE TRULY AT EASE.
THERE'S GUNK OOZING ALL OVER MY NEW BOOTS!
BUT, FOR THOSE FEW, NIGHT IS A COMFORTABLE CLOAK, WRAPPING ITSELF AROUND THEM, PROTECTING THEM FROM THE DAYTIME WORLD.
I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK!
OKAY, OKAY -- CUT THE DRAMATICS! ONCE WE'RE INSIDE I'LL KILL THE LIGHTS AND WE'LL GO OUT THE FRONT DOOR!
THESE TWO ARE MEMBERS OF THE FEW...
BIANCA ARDEN...
YOU DO HAVE THE PERMITS, RIGHT?
PANSAFRED! COPACOB...
MY DEAR, DO YOU THINK I'D SPEND HOURS IN LINE --
--AND FORGET OUR GOVERNMENT PERMITS FOR THEFT AND BREAKING AND ENTERING?
THE X-THIEVES!
I DON'T KNOW -- WOULD YOU?
ACH, YOUR DOUBT IS LIKE A KNIFE, BIANCA!



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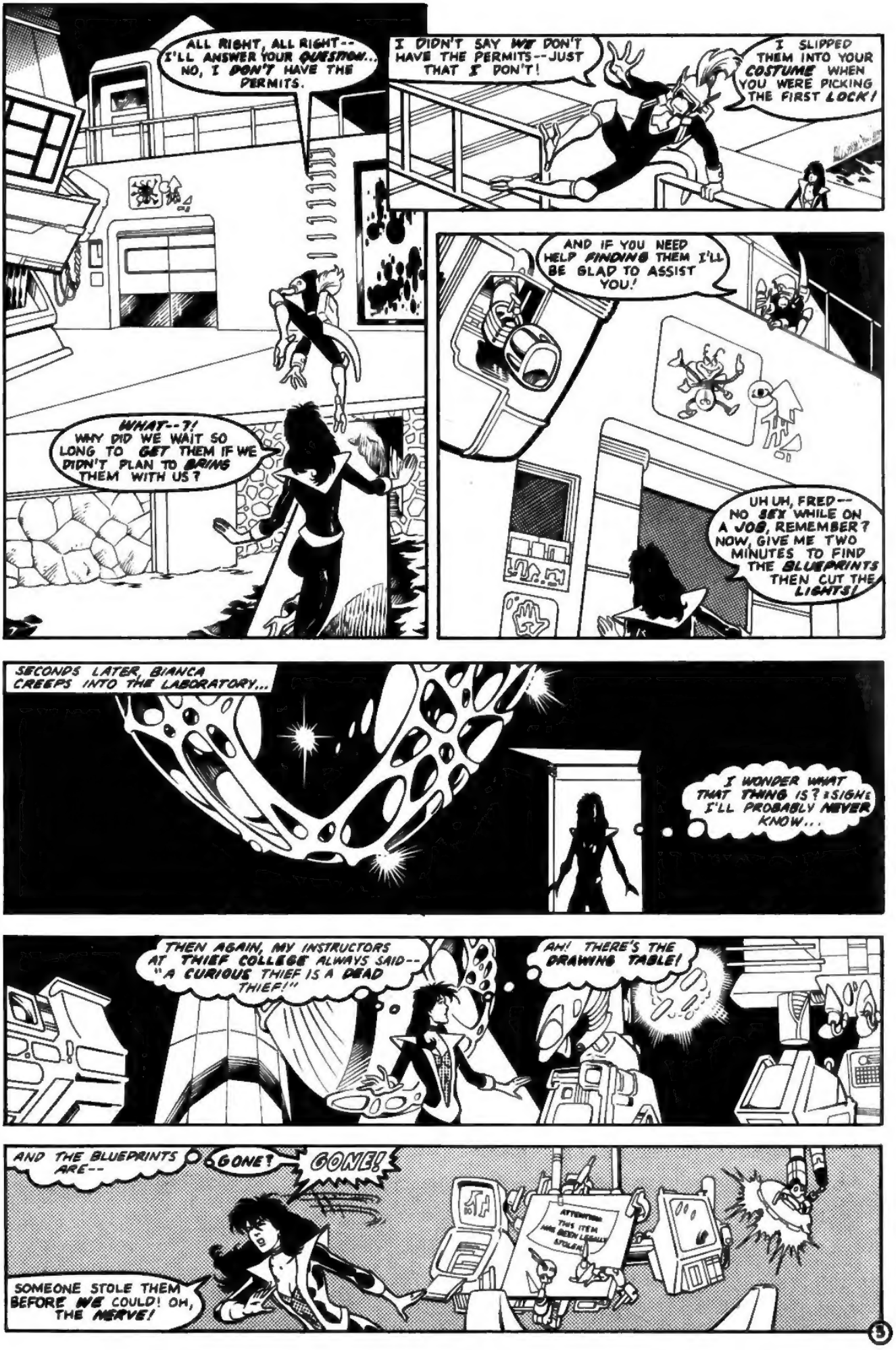
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT-- I'LL ANSWER YOUR QUESTION... NO, I DON'T HAVE THE PERMITS.
I DIDN'T SAY WE DON'T HAVE THE PERMITS--JUST THAT I DON'T!
I SLIPPED THEM INTO YOUR COSTUME WHEN YOU WERE PICKING THE FIRST LOCK!
WHAT--?! WHY DID WE WAIT SO LONG TO GET THEM IF WE DIDN'T PLAN TO BRING THEM WITH US?
AND IF YOU NEED HELP FINDING THEM I'LL BE GLAD TO ASSIST YOU!
UH UH, FRED-- NO SEX WHILE ON A JOB, REMEMBER? NOW, GIVE ME TWO MINUTES TO FIND THE BLUEPRINTS THEN CUT THE LIGHTS!
SECONDS LATER, BIANCA CREEPS INTO THE LABORATORY...
I WONDER WHAT THAT THING IS? SIGH I'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW...
THEN AGAIN, MY INSTRUCTORS AT THIEF COLLEGE ALWAYS SAID-- "A CURIOUS THIEF IS A DEAD THIEF!"
AH! THERE'S THE DRAWING TABLE!
AND THE BLUEPRINTS ARE--
GONE!
GONE!
ATTENTION THIS ITEM HAS BEEN LEGALLY STOLEN!
SOMEONE STOLE THEM BEFORE WE COULD! OH, THE NERVE!

ELSEWHERE...

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SEARCH FOR THE OFF BUTTON, BUT THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SHUT OFF A GENERATOR!

I COULD ALWAYS USE THE CAR--NO, IT'S MORE THAN A CAR--LOTS MORE! BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF I CALL IT THE FREDMOBILE!

I'LL JUST HAVE TO COME UP WITH MY OWN NAME FOR IT--ONCE I HAVE A CHANCE TO THINK ON IT...

MEANWHILE, I CAN USE IT TO OVERLOAD THE GENERATOR!

ZZZZZ

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE NOT...

OH, TO HELL WITH IT! WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE THE LIGHTS--

CLICK

--OFF, zhehs

HEY, BABE! I TELL YOU, TURNING THE LIGHTS OFF WAS HARDLY A CHALLENGE FOR A THIEF OF MY CALIBRE! UM, WHERE ARE THE BLUEPRINTS?
STOLEN!
WELL, I SHOULD HOPE SO! THAT'S WHAT WE'RE--
STOLEN-- BY SOMEONE ELSE!
WHAT? HOW GAUCHE, HORNING IN ON OUR HEIST!
YOU REGISTER A PROSPECTIVE THEFT WITH ALL THE PROPER AUTHORITIES AND THIS HAPPENS! NOW WE'LL HAVE TO RETURN THE FEE WE'RE GETTING TO PULL THIS JOB!
SOME THIEVES JUST KNOW NOTHING OF PROPER ETIQUETTE!
NEXT TIME WE COME TO THIS PLANET I SAY WE FORGET ABOUT THE PERMITS AND ALL THAT CRAP!
I CAN'T FORGET THE CRAP -- IT'S ALL OVER MY BOOTS! FRED, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PLANETS TO STEAL FROM, WHY COME BACK HERE?

THERE YOU GO, TAKING THE PRACTICAL APPROACH AGAIN!
THAT'S SOMETING WE WOMEN ARE KNOWN FOR, FRED.
THUD
THUD? BIANCA HAS NEVER GONE THUD BEFORE!
YOU OKAY, BABE?
YEAH, I'M FINE-- BUT IF I EVER FIND THE PERSON WHO DROPPED THIS THING IN MY WAY--
UH, THAT'S NOT EXACTLY A THING YOU TRIPPED OVER...
IT'S A CORPSE!
A CORPSE? AS IN DEAD?
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER KIND?

HERE'S ANOTHER GUARD AND, BY THE LOOK OF HIM, HE'S SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING JOINING THE CORPSE CLUB!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SPONSORING A NON-MEMBERSHIP DRIVE!
SPROING
GOTCHA! AND, HEY, IF THE FREDMOBILE CAN KEEP HIM ALIVE MAYBE HE CAN TELL US WHO DID THIS!
AND I'LL BET YOU ANYTHING IT'LL BE THE SAME PERSON WHO STOLE THE BLUEPRINTS WE WERE GOING TO STEAL!
I MEAN, ANYONE WHO'D STOOP THAT LOW WOULDN'T THINK TWICE ABOUT KNOCKING OFF SOME GUARDS!
CLICK
EVEN MORE, THAT LOW LIFE IS PROBABLY STILL NEARBY! YOU RUN ALONG WITH THE GUARD WHILE I STAY HERE AND LOOK FOR THAT TWIT! BESIDES, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO OPERATE THE FREDMOBILE ANYWAY!
WELL, THAT'S NOT MY FAULT! IF YOU'D JUST LET ME TEACH YOU HOW TO HANDLE A STRAIGHT SHIFT...
WOMEN NON-DRIVERS!
VROOOM

MINUTES LATER...
SO, THE ANONYMOUS CALL WASN'T A HOAX-- THERE HAS BEEN A MURDER!
I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK!
WITH ALL THE CORONERS IN THE GALAXY, WHY DID I HAVE TO GET ONE WHO CAN'T STAND THE SIGHT OF BLOOD?
UH, OH! THE COPS SURE GOT HERE FAST! BETTER JUST KEEP WALKING AND--
YOU THERE-- HALT!
YOU DON'T WORK HERE! LET ME SEE YOUR PERMITS!
OKAY...
GOT THE OL' PERMITS RIGHT HERE! ANYTHING ELSE, OFFICER?
LET ME READ YOUR PERMITS!
WELL, IF YOU MEANT READ, YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID READ! ALL YOU ASKED FOR WAS TO SEE--
THESE ARE THE WRONG PERMITS!
HUH? THAT'S A PERMIT FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING!
TRUE, BUT YOU NEED ONE FOR KILLING!
WHOA, THERE! I DIDN'T KILL THAT GUARD! I HATE TO RUN, BUT--
STOP! KILLER!

STOP THAT WOMAN-- SHE KILLED A GUARD WITHOUT A PERMIT!
HALT!
RESISTANCE IS FUTILE!
OOF!
YOUCH!
ARE THOSE YOUR OWN LINES OR DID YOU HAVE TO BE TAUGHT THEM IN COP SCHOOL?
HA! NOW I'M--
--IN BIG TROUBLE...
SURRENDER OR DIE!
OH, GOD, I NEVER WAS GOOD AT MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS!
EXIT
OKAY, I'LL CHOOSE... SURRENDER!
DID I PICK THE RIGHT ANSWER?
HA HA HA! PERFECT! MY TRAP IS SPRUNG!
YOU MAY BUY A PERMIT TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SILENT!
IT WAS WELL WORTH WAITING 6 HOURS IN THE PERMIT LINES FOR THIS!

HIGH ABOVE BIANCA AND HER TROUBLES, BEYOND THE OPPRESSIVE GRASP OF GRAVITY, ORBITS THE HOSPITAL WHERE FRED HAS TAKEN THE INJURED GUARD.
SO WHAT'S THE WORD, DOC? I'M A BUSY KIND OF GUY AND MY ONLY TRANSPORTATION -- AND THEN SOME -- IS TIED UP KEEPING THAT GUARD ALIVE!
HEY, IT'S COOL LI'L DUDE! IF HE SURVIVES WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE IN A COUPLE OF DAYS!
HOLD IT! BIANCA EXPECTS ME BACK IN A COUPLE OF HOURS, NOT DAYS!
BUT BY TIME TRAVEL--
I COULD GET ONE OF MYSELVES SHOT!
IF THE CONTINUITY INQUISITION CATCHES YOU IN YOUR OWN PAST THEY EXECUTE ONE OF YOU!
HEY, RELAX! I CAN'T HAVE YOU ALL UPTIGHT WHEN YOU HELP ME IN SURGERY TOMORROW!
HELP YOU IN--? OH, LORDY, WHY ME?
DAMMIT, JIM -- I'M A THIEF, NOT A DOCTOR!
I CAN SEE IT NOW -- FRED, THE ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELLING NURSE!

MEANWHILE, BIANCA IS TAKEN TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS...
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AROUND, TOOTS-- THIS IS GOING TO BE HOME FOR YOU FOR A LONG TIME TO COME!
PERMIT SALES HAVE TOTALLY REPLACED TAXATION HERE ON REGULUS, THEREBY ALLOWING OUR CITIZENS TO CHOOSE HOW MUCH MONEY TO PAY THE GOVERNMENT!
YEAH-- EXCEPT YOU HAVE TO HAVE A PERMIT FOR EVERYTHING-- EVEN GOING TO THE BATHROOM!
NOT EVERYTHING! BREATHING IS FREE!
HERE YOU ARE, MR. BOND -- YOUR NEW LICENSE TO KILL!
BASIC RIGHTS PERMITS
POLICE PROTECTION PERMITS
MEDICAL CARE PERMITS
KILLING PERMITS
CREDIT CARDS ONLY ACCEPTED WITH PROPER PERMITS!
I DEMAND TO BE ALLOWED TO BUY A GET-OUT-OF-JAIL PERMIT!
YOU HAVE TO HAVE A PERMIT TO MAKE DEMANDS!
HEY-- WHAT'S WITH THE LIGHT, HUH?
OH, GREAT-- ANOTHER CLICHE COME TO LIFE-- THE SMOKE FILLED INTERROGATION ROOM...
CONFESS!

FOUR HOURS LATER...
CONFESS!
CORPORAL FANG DOESN'T SEEM TO BE GETTING ANYWHERE..
INDEED... SHE'S A TOUGH ONE, SHE IS!
I DIDN'T DO IT. I'VE NEVER KILLED ANYONE THOUGH YOU GUYS ARE MAKING ME SERIOUSLY QUESTION MY POSITION ON THAT SUBJECT!
HEY, GUYS, LARRY IS HERE!
RIGHT-- EVERYBODY CLEAR OUT!
UM, WHO IS THIS LARRY YOU'RE SENDING IN -- THE LOCAL TORTURER?
NO, HE'S ON ANOTHER CASE RIGHT NOW. LARRY IS YOUR COURT APPOINTED DEFENSE-BOB.
MY WHAT--?
HOWDY, MA'AM! I'M YOUR DEFENSE-BOB, LARRY! GOLLY, YER 'BOUT THE PRETTIEST LITTLE KILLER I'VE DEFENDED IN A LONG TIME!
I'M NOT A KILLER, DAMMIT--
--I'M A THIEF!
FRED-- WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU? ARE YOU GOING TO LET ME NOT IN HERE?

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, IN THE ORBITING HOSPITAL...
WE'VE BEEN AT THIS ALL NIGHT, DOC-- ARE YOU ABOUT DONE?
LI'L DUDE, EXTENSIVE SURGERY LIKE THIS TAKES A LONG TIME -- AT LEAST TO GET IT RIGHT!
AND I THINK I'VE PUT ALL THE PIECES BACK IN THEIR PLACES NOW, SO WE'RE DONE!
FINALLY! SO WHAT'S THE GOOD WORD? WILL HE MAKE IT?
CAN'T SAY YET BUT HIS CHANCES ARE A LOT BETTER THAN THEY NORMALLY WOULD BE, SINCE WE USED YOUR FREDMOBILE TO PERFORM THE SURGERY!
I DON'T CALL IT THE FREDMOBILE.
OH? WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
I, UM... I'M WORKING ON THAT...
WE INTERRUPT OUR PROGRAM TO BRING YOU THIS SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN!
INN
NEWS BREAK
BIANCA ARDEN, PART OF THAT TERRIFIC TWOSOME, THE X-THIEVES, HAS BEEN ARRESTED FOR MURDERING A GUARD WITHOUT A PERMIT ON THE PLANET REGULUS. MISS ARDEN'S TRIAL WILL BE HELD TOMORROW.
UH OH!
INN
NO -- SHE DIDN'T KILL THE GUARD! BUT THE ONLY WITNESS THE COURT WILL BELIEVE MIGHT NOT SURVIVE THE DAY!

ON THE PLANET BELOW...
YOUR VISITATION PERMIT IS IN ORDER-- GO RIGHT IN.
THANK YOU, OFFICER!
WELL, WELL, WELL-- LOOK WHAT WE HAVE HERE! BIANCA ARDEN AT ODDS WITH THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER-- JUST LIKE THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU!
IT SIMPLY AMAZES ME HOW EASILY YOU GET YOURSELF INTO THESE SPOTS, DEAR!
CAT--?! YOU BITCH! THE LAST TIME YOU SAW ME YOU CAUSED MY TROUBLES!
"REMEMBER THAT FINAL EXAM JUST BEFORE GRADUATION FROM THIEF COLLEGE?"

"THAT LITTLE INCIDENT?"
"I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE PETTY ENOUGH TO HOLD THAT AGAINST ME!
"WHY NOT SIMPLY FORGET IT?"
"FORGET? HELL, NO!"
THERE'S YOUR TARGET, LADIES!
YOUR ASSIGNMENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS: CAT-- YOU TURN OFF THE ALARMS AND THE LIGHTS. BIANCA-- ONCE THE LIGHTS GO OUT, YOU SNATCH THE MICRO-CHIPS. ANY QUESTIONS?
NOPE!
I'VE GOT ONE! WHY CAN'T I BE THE ONE TO MAKE THE GRAB?
"AS I RECALL, CAT, YOU DIDN'T LIKE HIS ANSWER ONE BIT!
MY TALENTS ARE MORE SUITED TO DISMANTLE ALARMS-- WHAT THE HELL DOES HE MEAN BY THAT?
OH COME ON, CAT-- YOU FAILED LOCK PICKING 405 TWICE! THE ALARM AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEM LOCKS ARE SO SIMPLE EVEN YOU CAN PICK THEM -- BUT THE WINDOW LOCK IS JUST TOO COMPLEX FOR YOU!

SO WHY DON'T YOU QUIT BITCHING AND LET'S GET ON WITH IT? I WANT TO GET BACK IN TIME FOR THE DORM PARTY TONIGHT!
WHATEVER YOU SAY, LITTLE MISS TEACHER'S PET!
"ALL THROUGH SCHOOL YOU NEVER COULD ACCEPT THAT I WAS THE BETTER THIEF, COULD YOU, CAT?"
"YOU? THE BETTER THIEF? IF THAT'S SO, WHY ARE YOU THE ONE IN THE CELL?"
COME ON, CAT-- TRY NOT TO SCREW THIS ASSIGNMENT UP!
ALL RIGHT-- THERE GO THE LIGHTS!
MY TURN NOW!
HEH, HEH-- CAT WOULD KILL TO BE ABLE TO PICK LOCKS AS FAST AS I GOT THIS WINDOW OPEN!
NOW I'LL JUST--

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP

WHAT THE *HELL*--? CAT SHOULDN'T HAVE CUT THE *LIGHTS* UNTIL THE *ALARMS* WERE OFF!

"I WAS STILL A BIT *NAIVE* BACK THEN-- BELIEVING ALL THAT *HONOR* AMONG THIEVES CRAP.

"YOU *HAVE* NO HONOR, CAT!

"TOO BAD FOR YOU THAT *ESCAPE* WAS ANOTHER OF MY BETTER *SUBJECTS!*

"THE TEACHERS AT SCHOOL FIGURED IT OUT WHEN *YOU* DIDN'T COME BACK AND THEY READ THE *MICRO-CHIPS* HAD BEEN STOLEN ANYWAY.

"WHILE *I* LED THE GUARDS AWAY, *YOU* OBVIOUSLY SLIPPED IN AND *STOLE* THEM!"

"*VERY* GOOD, DEAR! FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END, I *SET YOU UP!*"

"GASPE AND THIS *MURDER CHARGE*-- YOU SET THAT UP TOO, DIDN'T YOU *CAT?* GET *BACK* HERE, CAT!

"DAMN!"

THE NEXT MORNING, BIANCA'S TRIAL BEGAN BRIGHT AND EARLY...
ACCORDING TO YOUR PRE-TRIAL STATEMENTS, YOU KNOW WHO ILLEGALLY KILLED THE GUARD. IF THAT PERSON IS IN THIS ROOM, WOULD YOU POINT HER OUT TO THE COURT?
YES, SIR--IT'S THAT WOMAN OVER THERE-- THE DEFENDANT! SHE KILLED THE GUARD!
WHAT IS THIS? I THOUGHT I WAS ENTITLED TO A FAIR TRIAL! I'M INNOCENT-- SHE'S THE ONE YOU WANT!
SHE IS NOT ON TRIAL, AND YOU DID NOT BUY A FAIR TRIAL PERMIT! BE SEATED!
CLOP!
YOUR OFFICERS TOOK MY MONEY SO HOW COULD I BUY ANY PERMIT?
YOU CAN BUY THEM IN ADVANCE, AS A SAFEGUARD, MY DEAR!
NOW, OFFICER, WHEN YOU TRIED TO QUESTION THE DEFENDANT, WHAT DID SHE DO?
SHE DID WHAT ALL GUILTY SCUM DO-- SHE RAN!

I OBJECT! I'M NOT GUILTY AND I'M NOT SCUM!

HA HA HA HA!

SILENCE!

YOU ARE THE DEFENDANT AND, AS SUCH, CANNOT OBJECT! ONLY BOBS WITH THE PROPER PERMITS ARE ALLOWED TO OBJECT-- AND YOUR DEFENSE-BOB OBVIOUSLY FINDS NOTHING TO OBJECT ABOUT! NOW SIT DOWN!

THE TESTIMONY CONTINUES THROUGH OUT THE MORNING AND INTO THE AFTERNOON...

OF COURSE I'LL TELL THE TRUTH--IT'S MY LIFE ON THE LINE!

OH, SURE -- I LOVE IT. YEP, A REAL PEACHY SET-UP YOU'VE GOT HERE. GREAT STUFF

BEINGS OF THE JURY, NOTE THE SARCASM IN HER VOICE! PERHAPS IT IS THIS OBVIOUS DISREGARD FOR OUR LAWS WHICH LED HER TO KILL WITHOUT A PERMIT!

TELL ME, MISS ARDEN-- DO YOU APPROVE OF OUR LEGAL SYSTEM?

OH, GIVE ME A BREAK! WHY WOULD I PICK UP THIEVING PERMITS AND SKIP THE ONE FOR KILLING IF I WERE PLANNING A MURDER? I TELL YOU THE WOMAN YOU WANT IS RIGHT OVER THERE!

AND I TELL YOU, YOU WILL SPEAK ONLY TO QUESTIONS-- NOTHING MORE!

CLOP!

DOES BIANCA HAVE A CHANCE? NOT IF HER DEFENSE-BOB CAN HELP IT
OH, YOU WANT ME TO CALL WITNESSES? DO DEFENSE-BOBS DO THAT SORT OF THING?
BUT A RAY OF HOPE IS PARKED JUST OUTSIDE THE COURT HOUSE!
PLENTY O' PERMITS
IT'S A GOOD THING I HAD LOTS OF CHANGE-- I WOULD HAVE NEVER DREAMED IT COULD TAKE SO MANY PERMITS JUST TO GO TO COURT!
"PHEW! HAD JUST ENOUGH MONEY! NOW IT'S TIME TO PLAY HARDBALL!
AND, SECONDS LATER...
OOPS-- I FORGOT TO PICK UP A DISABILITY BENEFITS PERMIT TODAY!
ZAP
FLASH
ZIP
ALL RIGHT, THIS FARCICAL TRIAL HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!

HOLD IT *RIGHT* THERE! YOU CAN'T DISRUPT COURT LIKE THAT!

SURE I CAN! I'VE GOT A *PERMIT* THAT SAYS SO!

OH, WELL--THAT'S *DIFFERENT!* CARRY ON!

NO NEED--I'M *THROUGH* DISRUPTING COURT! AT LEAST IN THE *NORMAL* SENSE!

HEY, BABE! YOU IN THE MARKET FOR A *NEW* DEFENSE-BOB?

COULD BE-- YOU LOOKING FOR THE *JOB?*

SMACK

JUST ONE *MINUTE,* SIR!

NOT JUST *ANYONE* CAN PRACTICE LAW IN THIS COURT!

THAT'S A PITY-- IF ENOUGH OF YOU *PRACTICED* IT YOU JUST MIGHT GET *GOOD* AT IT!

HOWEVER, AS YOU CAN SEE, I HAVE A PERMIT. RIGHT HERE WHICH ALLOWS ME TO *DEFEND* BIANCA!

AS A MATTER OF FACT, IF YOU LOOK AT THE FINE PRINT, YOU'LL SEE IT ALLOWS ME TO PERRY MASON!
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED, JUDGE -- THIS IS GOING TO BE ONE HELL OF A SHOW!
NOW, WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS THE PARTNER OF THE SLAIN GUARD! HE'LL EASILY POINT OUT THE REAL KILLER IF HE IS IN THIS COURT ROOM!
IS THAT TRUE? DO YOU KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE KILLER?
MMRRLLFF
HEH -- BANDAGE MUST BE A TAD TIGHT...
THEN PLEASE LOOSEN IT, IT IS ALMOST DINNER TIME AND I'M AS PECKISH AS AN EQUINE!
NOW, SIR, COULD YOU POINT TO THE PERSON WHO KILLED YOUR PARTNER AND SO GRIEVOUSLY WOUNDED YOU?
YEAH -- SHE'S RIGHT OVER THERE!
WHAT? YOU'RE POINTING AT ME!
SO MISS ARDEN IS GUILTY!
ARE YOU SAYING BIANCA DID IT?
GOSH, NO! I'M POINTING AT THE WOMAN BEHIND BIANCA!
OH MY, I'VE BEEN DISCOVERED!

SECONDS LATER, FRED HAS CAT ON THE STAND...
NOW, DID YOU KILL THE GUARD?
OF COURSE!
AND I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE THE PROPER PERMIT?
RIGHT HERE, SHORTY!
HOW ABOUT A PERMIT TO FRAME BIANCA?
I WOULDN'T FORGET THAT!
ALL RIGHT-- WHAT ABOUT ONE FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING?
HERE IT IS! ANYMORE QUESTIONS?
YES--HAVE YOU GOT A PERMIT TO STEAL THE BLUEPRINTS YOU TOOK?
OF COURSE--I WOULDN'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT! MAY I STEP DOWN NOW?
IN JUST A MOMENT. I'D LIKE TO EXAMINE YOUR THIEVING PERMIT AND THE STOLEN GOODS FOR A MOMENT, PLEASE.
THANK YOU-- I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER--
--THAT YOU ONLY STOLE WHAT YOU WERE PERMITTED TO STEAL, ETCETERA...
AH HA!
GUARDS-- ARREST THAT WOMAN! HER THIEVING PERMIT EXPIRED LAST MONTH!

THIS CAN'T BE! I BOUGHT THAT PERMIT TWO DAYS AGO!
ALL CHARGES AGAINST MISS ARDEN ARE DISMISSED!
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, FRED!
ONE SECOND, BIANCA! LET'S SEE, I'VE GOT THE BLUEPRINTS, NOW JUST LET ME GET OUR MACHINE HERE!
CLICK
POP
OKAY-- WE CAN GO!
BOY, HOW COULD CAT HAVE MADE SUCH A BIG MISTAKE? SHE OBVIOUSLY HAD THIS THING PLANNED FROM--
MALT! DO YOU HAVE A PERMIT TO BE TRANSPORTING THOSE STOLEN BLUEPRINTS!
RIGHT HERE, OFFICER.
I TRUST THAT COVERS EVERYTHING
UH, RIGHT-- BYE!
EXIT
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US, WE'VE GOT A TIME WARP TO CATCH!
MOMENTS LATER, IN DEEP SPACE...
FRED, WHAT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND IS HOW CAT COULD SCREW UP LIKE THAT! AND WITH SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS AN EXPIRED PERMIT!
SHE HAD A LITTLE HELP. I SWITCHED HER PERMIT FOR THE EXPIRED ONE RIGHT THERE IN THE COURT ROOM!
OH, I DID!
FRED, YOU'RE WONDERFUL!
I KNOW!
OH, YOU DIDN'T!

"X-THIEVES" X-TRA!

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

Dear Henry,

Well, #5 was a fun sort of issue, wasn't it?! Hunk the Bounty Hunter seems to be one of those people who just won't believe facts! No matter how much Bianca protested his actions, he still refused to believe her! (I had even a more absurd example of that happened to me recently. As part of a little debate we were having, I was explaining to a friend my personal interpretration of a common phrase, ie. what that phrase meant to me. My friend interruped me and said, "No, no! That's not what you think!" *Well,* talk about refusing to accept the obvious! If there's one thing I'm the definitive authority on, it's *my* interpretation of what *I* think! My interpretation might be wrong, but no one knows better than I what it actually *is*! Sheesh!) Hunk had a ready explanation for each of Bianca's objections, to explain what the situation "really" was. Sadly, this is all too common in everyday life. So many people seem to first adopt a viewpoint and then try to adapt or interpret the facts to suit that viewpoint, rather than looking at the facts for what they are and then trying to make sense out of them and construct a viewpoint from that.

By the way, I also enjoyed the title of the story! Witty and appropriate!

In the lettercol, Henry, you ask if I have any reply to the "letter of the month" from **Bill Chadwick.** Well, I *guess* I do. . .

First, it's discourteous. Obviously, **Bill Chadwick** is one of those people who think that personal insults are effective, witty, or fun. To me, they are none of these. They merely cloud the issue with superfluous sentiments and do more to betray the mean-spiritedness of the person flinging them than they do to aid his cause.

Second, it's presumptuous. **Mr. Chadwick** makes grand assumptions about what I do and do not do without, as far as I can see, any solid basis to do so.

Third, it's unproductive. It states an opinion without the least attempt to back it up. (I am assuming here, of course, that **Chadwick's** letter was not edited for space considerations.) His central assumption/opinion seems to be that "Authority" must be opposed. Why? To what end? And what *is* "Authority"? How is "Authority" different from "particular authorities"? (Morally, legally, practically, etc.) And so on. I do not expect **Bill Chadwick** to write a book to support his opinion but when I am left to try to infer the very substance of his position, it is clear that he did little or nothing to explain or support it.

Fourth, it's misguided. In essence, all I have said previously is that I believe in collective action more than you (Henry) do. Given that we *must* live in groups, I prefer (if at all possible) to live in a productive, co-operative group rather than amongst a collection of narrowly-focused individualists — let alone amongst self-serving, raving individualists, as **Mr. Chadwick** appears to be. And again I must make assumptions, but his seeming need to oppose "Authority" comes off as more a statement of the desire for personal "strength" than as a reasoned and practical philosophy. (If "Authority" must be opposed then I suppose that such things as stopping at red lights are ridiculous. After all, no one is going to tell *you* how to drive, right?)

If **Chadwick's** level of response was all that his philosophical colleagues had to offer, I wouldn't feel intellectually or morally challenged (though threatened personally). However, thankfully for those colleagues, it is not all that can be offered. Both you (Henry) and a person who wrote to me privately have defended their opposition to my views in far more reasoned and reasonable (though no less forceful) manners.

"T.M. Maple"
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, Ontario
M9L 2R9 Canada

Dear Henry,

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to T.M. Maple's letter in which he objects to my "raving" and narrow-focused individualism. I really don't care to get into a debate with T., because he's obviously hopelessly impervious to reason and wouldn't know a syllogism if one bit his Canadian bacon. All I would say to him directly is: go read THE LAW, by Frederick Bastiat, the best short book on politics every written. It's a classic, simple, hard-hitting, logical, and radical in the best sense of the term — going to the root of all the government evils which the Mape, dutiful little citizen that he is, has allowed himself to be convinced is *really* for his own good. If, after reading THE LAW, he can't see why something as blatantly coercionist as the Income Tax (to name just the most obvious example of legally-sanctioned plunder), isn't wrong . . . well, then he must *like* to be dominated and exploited.

To the rest of the readers, however, I say: Look, this guy can't even tell the difference between force and voluntary action. He says that he prefers to live in "a productive, co-operative group," and offers this as an apologia for his support of Statism. Like you can't have a productive and a co-operative group without someone weilding the whip and wearing the Iron Boots. Even arch-individualists (like me) believe in products, co-operative groups (when they serve our own rational self-interests, however each of us defines it). The staff of **SOUTHERN KNIGHTS** is a productive, co-operative group: they co-operate in producing a fine publication, and those of us who like it support it, by buying it. The kind of "productive, co-operative group" (spelled S-T-A-T-E) which Maple supports would *order* Henry, DAK & Co. to produce whatever kind of book was deemed (by those in power) to be "in the best interest of society;" would *force* Henry, DAK & Co. to "co-operate" in the production; and either *compel* the rest of us at gun-point to buy the book, or steal our money to subsidize it (the way government taxes us to support public broadcasting).

The good-little-citizen type (like you know who) gets bludgeoned on the head, knocked to the ground, and as the government-sanctioned thief rifles his wallets and pockets, says to himself, "Well, as long as it's legal, it must be okay, eh?" When Big Brother in Ottawa says "Jump!" Maple says "How high?!"

Maple doesn't even realize he's being victimized; note how vague he is on the concept of Authority. What is it (he wonders)? Why must it be opposed? Like Zippy the Pinhead in a concentration camp, asking the guard, "Am I being oppressed yet?"

It would seem clear to me, from the context of my letter, that by Authority I was referring to a principle or mental-set that some people (who in any given locality usually band together and call themselves the Government, except in Italian neighborhoods, where they're more forthright and simply call themselves "the Mob") have the right to rule over the rest of us. And I guess before T.M. begins scratching his head and wondering, "Well, what is 'rule'? Why must it be opposed?!" I simply mean "imposing their desires on others by force or the threat of force." (I mean *force*, dammit — physical coercion, violence — all the stuff the Bad Guys in comics do without legal sanction.) Once you realize what Authority is, you realize (if you have any sense of self-esteem or self-worth) why you should oppose it. No, I don't believe in driving through redlights, but that's simply enlightened self-interest: I'd rather not move around in motorized, urban society where everyone drives according to whim. (Although I already do move around in one: it's called "Atlanta," ha ha.) But that does not begin to probe the more basic question of who *should* own the streets — a question far too complex to analyze, explore or debate in a comic-book letters column, a question I dare not pose to the Mape at this point. *He* still thinks it's okay for the government to tell him how much he can earn or what he can read. Selling the streets (and the traffic lights) would scare the Molson out of him.

Bill Chadwick
76 Twelfth Street #8
Atlanta, GA 30309

Well, we can hardly be said to have a boring, non-controversial letters column here! And, while I probably wouldn't have worded it quite as, um, forcefully as Bill did, I do agree with what he had to say about authority.

As usual, TM, a reply is both welcome and encouraged! And, should anyone else out there want to jump into the fray — on either side — please feel free!

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